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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 000187

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DEPARTMENT FOR S/P DR. KRASNER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: S/P KRASNER DISCUSSES IRAQ, MIDDLE EAST,  
U.S.-TURKEY RELATIONS IN ISTANBUL

Classified By: Consul General Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Following policy/planning consultations with the Turkish Foreign Ministry in Ankara, S/P Director Stephen Krasner met with the secular, nationalist-leaning Marmara group as well as academics in Istanbul on February 23-24. Lecturer and writer Soli Ozel questioned how a revolutionary foreign policy could result in Middle East stability. The answer now, he said, was to sit down and "hash it all out" with all sides. End summary.

#### A REVOLUTIONARY FOREIGN POLICY

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12. (C) S/P Director Stephen Krasner spoke with Turkish foreign policy lecturer, author and writer Soli Ozel on February 24. Ozel observed that America's Iraq intervention upset the social basis of power for the entire Middle East established in the 1920s. The move destroyed the Iraqi state and led to the end of Sunni dominance throughout the region. This revolutionary foreign policy was not welcomed by other states. Since Iraq was not a client state, the revolution there could not be controlled from the center. "How," he asked, "can you manage the situation and bring about order?" In revolutions, repercussions are not felt immediately; in the first decades, the radicals dominate. Krasner responded that it was not an accident; the U.S. wanted to upset the existing order. Saddam had led a repressive, threatening regime. A moderate center could yet emerge, he argued. Turkey, a medium-sized, yet important regional power, could not solve big regional issues on its own, but could join the U.S. by continuing its cooperation on Iraq and by pressuring Iran.

13. (C) Ozel said that short term, all sides within Iraq supported extremist factions to achieve the best possible deal at the end of the game. The U.S. had "created a mess" in Iraq. He hoped the U.S. wouldn't continue to rearrange the region without discussing its moves in advance with other regional states. He said it was at least important to give the impression that the U.S. listened and heard. He urged engagement with the Syrians. The Turkish government was anxious to help in approaching the Syrians, he claimed. President Sezer visited President al-Asad in April 2005, and Turkey had been instrumental in starting a second track dialogue between Syria and Israel last year, acknowledged by Israel. Turkey would not double cross the U.S.-- its efforts were transparent. The best regional answer, Ozel said, would be for all sides -- the U.S., Iraq, Syria, Iran -- to sit down at the table as equals and "hash it all out."

14. (C) Krasner asked why Iran would cut a deal with the U.S. Didn't they want to bloody the U.S. and force a departure? Ozel said Iran did not know the real U.S. interest; the

current atmosphere in Washington made it difficult to judge. Krasner noted the Secretary had offered talks the previous summer if the regime suspended its nuclear programs; the offer was still on the table. Ozel outlined what he thought were Iranian requisites for talks. The U.S. would need to recognize Iranian interests and give assurances the regime would not be overthrown. Krasner said anti-western elements in Iran might try to undercut any long-term deal. Ozel responded that it was not until December that Ahmadinejad had been successfully quieted. He sympathized that it was difficult for the U.S. to know which policy to follow until it was certain which group would come out on top -- but the U.S. had shown hubris in Iraq; Israel the same in Lebanon; maybe Iran was demonstrating theirs. It was ironic that Iran was in so many ways close to the U.S.

#### U.S.-TURKEY RELATIONS STUCK ON KURDS

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¶15. (C) Ozel lamented the state of U.S.-Turkish relations, noting the generally shared outlook and similar values. He partially blamed Turkey's trouble with the PKK on domestic politics that over-inflated the importance of the problem. The U.S. had delivered Ocalan to Turkey in 1999 but since then, Turkey had done nothing to make progress. The PKK had become an alibi for the Turkish government which reduced all policy down to this one issue. Because of the focus, the GOT had no ability, Ozel said, to move forward on other issues with the U.S. There was a vicious cycle. Ocalan did not want to lose influence, the Iraqi Kurds were challenging Turkey with respect to Kirkuk and other agenda items, and Turks were furious.

¶16. (C) With regard to Kirkuk, the constitutional process in Iraq was being destroyed every day by Kurds, according to

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Ozel, who were packing their own people into the city. This was unfortunate; Iraq had been multi-ethnic, multi-confessional. Now, only Kirkuk maintained this character. Had the U.S. considered a special status for the city something like Brussels, for instance, enjoyed within the EU? The U.S. argument on the Iraqi constitution and the Kirkuk referendum increased the U.S.' credibility problem given the population shift the Kurds were openly effecting.

¶17. (C) Ozel said people had a hard time understanding American foreign policy. David Ignatius had lectured recently in Russia, quoting Henry Kissinger as saying, "Iran must decide if it is a cause or a nation." Someone in the audience responded that the U.S. must decide as well if it is a nation or a cause. Critics of President Bush said he displayed self-righteousness, that the U.S. stood for good but so long as the speaker cannot see what the critics are saying, the critics cannot see the U.S. for what it is -- no matter how well-intentioned the actions. Krasner pointed out that the American approach had worked out extremely well over time. It was the point of Robert Kagan's recent book, "Dangerous Nation". Perhaps the U.S. had been a bit more confident than warranted after the fall of the USSR, but stepping back, one could see that over the long term U.S. foreign policy had been very successful.

¶18. (U) This cable was cleared by Dr. Krasner.  
JONES